ATTENTION

SEXUAL ORIENTED
MATERIAL ENCLOSED.

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TO MINORS.

PARASITE

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BORN BAD
Andrew Vachss
(Vintage)

DOWN IN THE ZERO
Andrew Vachss
(Knopf)

MURDER IN THE HEART
Alexandra Artley
(Penguin)

A CRY FOR JUSTICE
Joy Swift
(Cool Hand)

FACTS

"The spiritual associations that began with Plato and Xenophon and were developed on Roman sarcophagi, absorbed into Christianity by the OVIDIUS MORALIZATUS, and reaffirmed by the Neoplatonists were in the end adapted for the glorification of individual deceased children. A similar symbolic use of Ganymede occurred in Medicean family iconography at about the same time, when Margarita Costa eulogized the infant son of Ferdinand II as Ganymede. The coincidence suggests that concern for children was a widespread development in this period, contributing to the general tendency to depict Ganymede as younger and less erotic than in the preceding century. In these images no trace remains of the other Ganymede, the beautiful adolescent ephebe who had evoked for so many Italian artists thoughts of adult love and sensuality. Such thoughts would be irrelevant, even tasteless, in a picture idealizing a dead child. Whereas in Italy the spiritual purity of the youth had once served as a refined symbolic justification for various forms and degrees of pederasty, by the midseventeenth century both the Dutch and the Italians took the same references more literally, ignored the erotic undertone, and immortalized the young Ganymede not as lover but as offspring."
(GANYMEDE IN THE RENAISSANCE, James M. Saslow, Yale, 1986)

"Anyway, I don't remember how I got this job stocking and sweeping for a small variety store, but I do remember my boss touching my crotch one day commenting on my tight Levis. I did not rebuff his advances, and we entered into a sexual situation. I was never into any sort of anal action but was a willing participant in mutual fellatio. The affair lasted only a short time. My psychotherapist posed an interesting question: "Do you think that your interest in young boys may relate to your seduction as a young boy?" Interesting, isn't it? (...) One inmate, a homosexual, told me that he was sodomized by an 11-year-old cousin when he was 7. He liked it. By the time he was in his teens, growing up in a very strict family setting that allowed no dating prior to senior high school, he was not interested in dating as he had

At a recent reading and signing in Chicago, Andrew Vachss told all those stories his fans just soak to hear. How perverts expertly lie and treatment for child abusers is the "growth industry for the nineties". How kiddie porn works. How he saw "red spots" in front of his eyes when, as a sexual disease statistician, he discovered that a man's lacerated penis was actually caused by a tight baby-hole rape. He got to use his little "a man...no... a male" trick where he pauses, shakes his head slightly, and knows that every dull middle-aged waste case in front of him thinks they're the only one to really get it. He expressed his admiration for Oprah and her benevolent riches and explained his concern for the future. He seemed especially excited over the possibilities for a new law that would prosecute men who live in the States but travel outside its boundaries, like Thailand, to have sex with children.

Mr. Vachss graciously exposed his quick-fire nettled mind to his overcaring audience, deftly separating the sad-kid statistics

established a large circle of male friends including several relatives. This same man said that he was working in Los Angeles as a paramedic and on several occasions used his profession to seduce young boys."
(MAN/child, Howard Hunter, McFarland, 1991)

"Tommy terrorized the children by beating their mother in front of them, almost daily. Every two or three days, Hilda Thompson would be knocked to the ground by a punch on the side of the head and kicked in the stomach. Then came the thing they all feared the most -the moment when Tommy would pause and deliberately sit down to put on a pair of hard outdoor shoes, specially kept for the purpose of kicking Hilda Thompson on the shins until she wanted to die with pain."

Tommy Thompson's children (two daughters: June and Hilda) kept diaries during the important parts of their thirty years or so with Dad. As did their mother. June and Hilda killed their father with a shotgun after they'd decided they'd had enough of his torture.

Alexandra Artley, in her search for the details behind the torture, uncovers quite an astonishing catalog of sickness and tragedy. She interviews the still numb, still suffering girls and rips through their diaries. As a journalist, Ms. Artley is detached yet compassionate, and while she recounts her reactions and travails at getting to the truth, she allows the facts to speak alone. Her involvement with the family is emotional and typical. But it is the family that creates the facts:

"When he was at home, Hilda Thompson was forbidden to hold or cuddle her new baby -the child was to be fed quickly and then set down. Much as she longed to hold and comfort the infant who, as she grew, cast up a small hand and desperately nuzzled the air for solid contact, Hilda Thompson was forced to ignore her, even as the flood of milk which is stimulated in nursing mothers by an infant's cry set her breasts ludicrously square with engorgement."

"So, for quite a long time -probably in 1964- your Mum knew that Tommy was going to rape you?"

"At some time in her middle teens, Tommy Thompson did not even bother sending Mrs. Thompson and Hilda out of the house on those days of the week when he fancied abusing his elder daughter. At first, when kindled by something he had seen on television, or once the regular cycle of desire and easy release had been established as a kind of sexual addiction, he would go upstairs by himself to his military store room, as if to itemize or check the 'stores'. Then, his voice would pitch downstairs, "June, come up here and help me a minute." "

Details don't come easy. Facts are never unencumbered. Theories are not evidence.

"I saw an innocent kid today. His face wasn't, but I think he was. There was too much pain and longing in his eyes for him, at least at that moment, not to have been innocent.

It got me thinking: Did I want to be innocent again? I'm not really sure. Could I even stand it? What would happen to all my hard and painfully won knowledge -about myself, my kids, the world in general, the healthy ingrained suspicion of my motives? If I became innocent again? Would I lose it all? Would I have to go through it all over again?

This kid had definitely been around the horn. I mean, to use an earlier metaphor, he had definitely "seen the

from the terrible realities of ineffectual judiciaries, bloated bureaucracies and simply evil lusty criminals or "freaks" as he loves to call them.

Imagine an entire room of confused overfed, over-anxious libidos swimming around and lolling and rolling all over each other's sick needs and concern. Mamas who want to cry in public, businessmen who want to save the world and tell their friends, internet punks and tattoo slackers who're trying desperately not to be seen as the nerds they were in high school.

NAMBLA creates such a fuss.

Vachss invokes their name and the play-group lynch mob draws tight. Their heads shook and groaned. They were waiting for the word. What can we do, what can you do, what we all should do rang and burned through the action-movie minds of the assembled now and future blue-rinse set. Men actually thinking they can argue their right to have sex -to fuck, to rape, to destroy- the princely firm tight temples of perfectly skinny sweaty smiling juicy little boys.

The new issue of STEAM continues to have problems with such suggestions, remote though they are. The latest issue (vol. 2, no. 3) contains letters and editorials of outrage over the previous issue's inclusion of

I caressed the air around me as I imagined touching and holding my precious children. A tiny finger reached up to wipe away a tear. I didn't ever want to leave this corner!"

"George took my arm and guided me toward the pink velvet caskets that cradled our daughters. Tonya's little cheeks were all puffed out, her chin held tight against her chest, her eyes squinted shut to block out the horrible pain. The lacy cuffs of her starched navy blue dress seemed too tight on her chubby arms, and the bonnet strings left creases under her neck and hid her fine shoulder-length ash-blonde hair.

I wanted to pick her up and rock her, and take away the terror. Guilt overwhelmed me for leaving her to endure such a nightmare alone. She hid in my bed; she should have been safe there. She must have cried out for me.

Why did they stab such a sweet little girl? What did she do to deserve such a death? She was still so small, yet she was growing up so fast; a little piece of clay just starting to take shape. I'd had such plans for her fourth birthday, now only six days away. But now, any plans we'd made for her future were dashed forever."

Joy continues her self-flagellation to the point of spewing out more children. The couple's first post-murder hug and fuck comes a mere five days after the attack and is reported in repulsive aplomb:

"We wept together entwined as one. The gentle caresses grew hungrier and more urgent as we explored each other as if for the first time. Empty aching limbs longed to be assured we weren't alone. Our lovemaking fulfilled our famished bodies, bringing feeling back into our grief-numbed hearts. Giving us strength for the days to come."

And finally Joy decides to visit the boy that destroyed her family, dreams and personality -to fill him with the word of god. Fittingly, Billy Dyer is unrepentant and manipulative. And Joy misses the point. While she struggles to give her and her kids' lives over to something like a god, it is Billy Dyer to whom she has surrendered everything.

Perfectly human.

"It's really quite extraordinary', Gresham said as he scrubbed up after the post-mortem. 'I have seen similar injuries among consenting homosexual men after orgies but I have never examined a corpse with injuries like that and I certainly never seen them inflicted on a child.' Those who worked closely with Gresham knew that he was always horrified at analysing violent injuries inflicted on children, despite the countless times he had done it. But as the normally jovial pathologist walked away from the mortuary that day, he was sunk in a thoughtful silence.

Commander Corbett studied Professor Gresham's revelatory report and the graphic photographs taken at the post-mortem. He was left in no doubt as to the gravity of the crime committed against Jason. He told the senior detectives on Operation Stranger: 'Gentlemen, we are now dealing with something, the likes of which we have never seen before.'"
(LAMBS TO THE SLAUGHTER, Ted Oliver & Ramsay Smith, Warner Books, 1993)

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don't get. And then there's the better bits:

"I thought that's what was going on. I thought that's what men were doing. I thought they were jerking off to all the diaper commercials, but now I know they are. It clarified why men piss me off so much. Because they are assholes and they will fuck their children. They'll pretend they're not doing it and pretend they're not doing it. Then you get into the sex industry and boom, there it is."

More respect for sluts can be gleaned from the special issue of TIME OUT (Aug. 31-Sept.7) from London. HOW NICE IS VICE attempts to cover all aspects of London's whore business. From drug-street pigs to brutal metal rod raping pimps to kids going cheaper by the day, call girls and rent boys:

"I stopped doing escort work a few years ago when I was raped at knifepoint by a guy who broke into a country home and phoned up the agency. In this kind of work you have a better understanding of what men are about and why. You don't take something like rape personally."

A lovely crop of magazines all worth searching through the far too crowded racks of the local news emporium. It's alot of work but just think how important the job is.

violate them -I don't care whether they do it in the name of art or science or fun- are my enemy and they should be yours."

Vachss can't be trusted. The honesty in his situations -and the faith in his obsequious protestations- never materialize because he's not bothered by the idea of sugar-coating the particulars. No matter how black and gritty his pervert bent is, Vachss is ready to agree and adhere to a greater good that doesn't include reality. His facts are flatly specious in light of his camp ethics. His work is irritating at best, silly at worst, and yet perversely fascinating as a complicitous atavism; feeding on its own raging hating impotence.

Believability is always a problem. Trust and faith and honesty. Cynicism and trauma and denial.

Joy Swift's situation is the kind where one would expect to find all sorts of lies and rationalizations. A fifteen year old girl gets married to a guy more than twice her age and shits out two kids by the time she turns eighteen. Of course, at the time of her marriage her husband already had three kids, the oldest of whom was a thirteen year old girl. Naturally his intentions are questionable. And as her story progresses to the point where the family end up living in a tent down by the river, with the kids kept away from schooling 'cause of her professed (and lucky) love of the mountains, the white-trash pit's so deep that any details tend to be judged more for their pained clumsiness than for anything like information value.

"We were teaching our kids at home now, not even willing to trust their care to the school system. The years had not eased our fears. On the contrary, time made us more wary of dangers. As often as we moved, home schooling was the most stable educational environment we could offer. The kids excelled in geography, having travelled through thirty-six states already."

But the lazy stumbling of a backwoods clan is not the reason one would be tolerant of, or interested in Joy's history. Her book A CRY FOR JUSTICE covers the effects of having a fourteen year old neighbor shoot her little brood to death.

Billy Dyer shot four of George and Joy's kids during a robbery attempt that turned ugly due only to Billy's angry mental instability. The children were aged 14, 12, 3 and just 1½. The oldest two were Joy's stepsons, the younger ones her natural babies. The fifth child, George's oldest daughter, was in a hospital, suffering from cancer -she died just three weeks after the murders.

Joy, like Andrew Vachss, finds herself with a unique viewpoint due to her extraordinary circumstances. And, like Vachss, that doesn't necessarily require her to rise to the occasion. Her clouding or completely disregarding the facts of her life with petty fibs and cheap justifications are nothing when compared to her desperate search for meaning through the corpses of five children. Of course, Joy finds solace in god: the great refuge of the powerless.

But, unlike Vachss, Joy takes us through the machinery like an old shut-in mom pointing out the road sites on a day trip to the brewery. Her faith is transparent and vengeful, and thus all the more poignant. She fuels the pain to greater heights:

"Suddenly, it felt like all the kids were sitting on my lap. almost all of which occurred in 1994 and included strangling and beating.

And in typical gay whipping boy fashion, THE ADVOCATE includes a quick run down of other gay oriented serial killers, like Edward Perkins whose victims "had been stabbed far more times than would have been required to kill them" and Robert Lee Bennett Jr.; otherwise known as the "Handcuff Man" whose lusts led him to the joys of picking up male hustlers and "paying them to drink vodka that he had secretly laced with drugs, handcuffing and beating them, and finally setting fire to their legs and genitals".

Further afield in the gay sex-positive PC rundown is the latest issue of ON OUR BACKS (July/August 1994). WORKING GIRLS: LESBIAN AND BISEXUAL SEX WORKERS TELL IT LIKE IT IS is the title of Trish Thomas' roundtable discussion and supportive hug brunch on contemporary mores in female sex-for-sale roles. Just how cheap is the expensive cunt in the window? What ticks and twitches behind the armoured wallet and blank fake pout and slurp?

More wholesale swallowing. More empowerment ethics and new-age sewer genius; more release excuses and "the power of knowing" the respect they do or

elephant" -and had been trampled....He wouldn't take his eyes off me, but I didn't mind. I mean, I wasn't uncomfortable. Even though he was crying."
(COVENANT HOUSE, Bruce Ritter, Doubleday, 1987)

"Each night, in order to stay warm, Billy would break into a car, jump start the motor, run the heater, and play the radio for company. During the cool nights of Autumn Billy didn't mind the ritual. But then January came howling through the city, piling snow on every corner. Even a heated car wasn't enough to keep Billy warm against the bitter cold."
(donation card sent out by Covenant House)

"Dear Bruce,
Well, here I am and there you are. I don't believe you will ever see me face to face so here I am writing you this letter. I am truly sorry that Covenant House has to endure this publicity because I believe the service it offers is a good one. The only thing I ever wanted was to let you know, or at least tell you, that you were wrong. You were wrong for inflicting your desires on a 14 year old. If you wish to have sex with a male, you should have chosen one who was old enough (at least 18). You knew the pain I was suffering and it was your job to help me, not hurt me. I thought and believed your dream was to help kids and give them a fighting chance, a place where kids could feel safe and loved and with a better feeling about themselves. (...)
Survivor of your abuse,
Darryl James Bassile"
(BROKEN COVENANT, Charles M. Sennott, Simon & Schuster,1992)

It's too easy to think of Andrew Vachss as just another Bruce Ritter waiting to happen. Or even as one of the multitudes whose "good" work and interests belie a darker, more lustful, fascination that need never be articulated or actualized. The irony is that such accusations and condemnations stem from the very same cheap moralism that Vachss seems to hold so dear. Vachss' characters and themes never rise above the vigilante revenge and hardcore-moral-good codes of geeks who use words like god or love to prop up any excuse anywhere. Vachss isn't interested in forgiving psychologies or help programs for the evil-doers, he's made it his lifestyle to be that callused one-eyed ram that knows kids and animals are only safe around him. The end justifies the means and while Ritter may (or may not) have helped millions of runaways around the world through his Covenant House ministries, he was still fucking some and Vachss knows even one is too many.

Vachss' and Ritter's expressed concerns are the same, and neither one is/was above selling out to help the kids: Ham-fisted condescending cartoons. And both (like every other ugly politician, newscaster, trust entrepreneur, salesman) tidy up their reasons to live by their service to others: an undying and pure devotion to a greater good, like, say, the iconography of innocence.

Ritter poured out paeans to street kids to evoke sympathy and raise funds. Vachss writes detective fiction. He contends that his attempts at nonfiction didn't attract enough attention and his only recourse was to hit the people where they live. In his introduction to BORN BAD, a collection of short stories and sad shots at plays, character assessments and unctious science fiction, he slithers:

an article entitled QUEEREST QUEERS: MAN/BOY LOVE FACES VIOLENCE OUT OF CONTROL written by Bill Andriette, the editor of the NAMBLA bulletin:
"It is the cowardice of our intellectuals and writers, who stand by mute as the possession of our art, our pornography, and our writing becomes felonious, who never question why taking a photo of a sixteen-year-old -or an eight-year-old!- with a hard-on should be punished worse than killing that same sixteen-year-old"

The ire is predictably vicious, the defense silly and cloying. But the attention NAMBLA is getting speaks well.

The current issue of FILM THREAT VIDEO GUIDE (issue#11) carries a feature on the new film release CHICKEN HAWK. CHICKEN HAWK is presently touring the smaller art-house theaters around America and is due for release on video by Stranger Than Fiction in the near future. The article reviews the shot-on-video movie that attempts to document the lives of five NAMBLA members. FTVG also covers some of the (again, predictable) controversy the film's showing has caused.

The film is sure to find its audience - the outre' camp factor is sure to be high- among the same kids who buy HATED (the G.G. Allin documentary

"I'll spare you self-congratulatory adjectives. Writing isn't my work, it's an organic extension of that work. I may not be a good writer, but I write for a good reason. And if that reason isn't apparent by the time you've finished this collection, I didn't get the job done."

Fuck fiction. Fuck good taste. Vachss has a mission and as his job as a lawyer who only represents children proves, he has the access to facts and truths that all those other altruistic poseurs don't. Vachss can change your mind and explain respect and humanity to you via a series of happily-poorly written pieces of trite hard-boiled romance.

Vachss has seen the pictures, heard the stories face to face from crying mothers and bleating babes, seethed in front of the morose but unrepentant child-fuckers and raged at the red taped nine to fivers who fail to share in the loathsome burden of trust and righteous care.

He spends his life in the middle of hell (just as Ritter had to set up shop in Times Square) and he's gonna let you know what's there. Vachss' latest novel follows the exact same tack as his short stories. INTO THE ZERO continues to expose the horror that Vachss has seen in the eyes of abused children and S/M whores:

"Only a P.O.box was listed, no name. A new kind of kiddie porn, legal too -I'd never heard of it before. Freaks carefully recording their own children getting whipped. To entertain other maggots. For money. I felt ice-picks of fire in my chest."

And he fucking explodes with the knowledge of how the machinations twist innocent minds. The psychologies. The methods and the way damage works and feels:

"I wanted to do it. I mean after a while, I wanted to do it. All the time. All she had to do was touch me. The handle, that's what she called it. Charm says everybody has a handle. I thought she meant my ...cock. But that wasn't it. The handle, it's the way you twist people.

How did it start?

'I was in my room. In my bathroom, taking a shower. And she just came in there. I was...embarrassed. But she did something...with her mouth...and I got excited. Then she did it. With her hand. Then she...hit me. Hard. It hurt. I was... crying. And she kept hitting me. She told me I was a dirty little boy. I was scared of her, but she did it again, later. Then she tole me I had to do what she said."

And:

"My mother. I told my mother. She tied me up. In a chair. She slapped me and slapped me, screaming. She told me I was a little slut. I didn't even know what it meant, then. She said if I ever told her filthy stories again, she'd burn me. She held a candle right up to my face. I was so scared I wet myself. She just left me there like that. For a long, long time. I never told her anything again."

From BORN BAD:

"The pressure got too strong for her little-girl heart. She started wetting the bed, her grades fell way off in school. Then the night terrors came."

And:

"Ellen burned me. Just to show me she could do it. My baby-sitter. She was in charge when my parents would go out. Sometimes she would beat me. Spanking, she called it. She would do it real hard until I would cry. Then she would tell me I was a good boy."

produced by the same team as CHICKEN HAWK). And perhaps Maury and Geraldo will focus their gaze towards the work and bring it to the attention of the Vachss fans. Unfortunately,any hope for real art may be dashed, as director Adi Sideman (quoted in FTVG) confessed:

"But I didn't look for victims, that's been done before besides I couldn't find any children that had been molested by NAMBLA members and I certainly wasn't going to advertise for them in the newspapers."

The cover of gay glossy 10 PERCENT continues the theme: NIXING NAMBLA; TURNING A CRITICAL EYE ON MAN-BOY LOVE. Inside is an article by Brent Hartinger, who traces NAMBLA's history in and out of gay politics with a polite if fake fence-sitting slant.

Hartinger interviews Andriette and the author of ABUSED BOYS: THE SILENT VICTIMS OF ABUSE; Mic Hunter. He covers the prime movers in gay politics -Representative Barney Frank says:

"The question of age-of-consent doesn't seem to me to be a gay issue, and to buy into what I think is a very inaccurate and damaging argument - that gay people are more prone to have sex with children than other people."

And charts the merging of the gay movement into PC overload via **feminist** and lesbian concerns

Under Vachss purview is all sorts of sexual dementia: child sexual abuse (his favorite) to serial killers to animal torture. And when he has time, like in his 259 page novel, he'll delve a little deeper into subjects that may offer hope -picnics ("righteous"), car racing and respectful competition, healthy teen love and poetry.

Given that most fiction is too contrived; too removed from reality to mean anything more than a prurient leer into someone's favorite masturbation fantasies, the only hook to Vachss' cheap bake-sale version is in the information that he advertises to know and offers to impart. Sideways.

Unfortunately, Vachss seems hopelessly out of touch. His characters are talk show safe and the situations similarly tired. If his job is to convince one of the desperate lengths and single-minded brutality of lustful predators hidden among children, and then of the all encompassing suffering-style of children and those who really care about them (as it would seem from his obsessiveness) then Mr. Vachss fails. Surprisingly, given how he spends his days, Vachss' cliched scenarios and bumbling babies bear all the personality of a suburban gossip breakfast. Underneath the self-conscious street lingo and goofy dramatics, the drive of Vachss' heart is all Barry Manilow.

So as Vachss confuses his life with his writing by talking about his mission, so may the reader look for greater appeal. Could it be that the sufferers -the victim subjects that Vachss fawns over- are forever lost to the ill-equipped and foolish hands of tepid moralists like Vachss and therefore consigned to permanent soul destruction and social entropy? Could it be that the love and worry in the minds of the dedicated few that Vachss (and his ridiculous phantasms) typifies are so fraught with smoky moral tenets and vague pop-psych definitions as to be beyond contemporary understanding?

Perhaps that's the kick that Vachss' audience is looking for. Maybe the tattered and ratty shroud of morality that seems to choke Vachss' tacky yarns of eye-for-an-eye revenge is more correctly an accurate reflection of the real viciousness of child sexual abuse. That those in charge of the care of children, whether it be confused with parental love or brotherly ecumenical concern, are grossly incapable of understanding the job, let alone helping it get better or even keeping out of the fucking way. The gift that keeps on giving.

The fact that Vachss knows so little about what he pretends to know so much is obvious beyond his pathetic use of hopeful play-fiction to explain pain and torture. In an interview with THE SCREAM FACTORY, published in spring '93, he lies helplessly out of touch:

"VACHSS: There's a big-time evil freak who actually published a magazine containing photographs of children that were-

TSF: PURE, I think.

VACHSS: You got it, you got it. Now what do you say, was that art? That was a deliberate attempt to celebrate the torture of infants. Now does this guy have the guts to say 'Okay, I'm a freak and this gets me off'? No. He runs and hides and says it's an artistic statement. The bottom line is this: I don't care what adults do to each other, for each other, with each other. I don't feel it's any of my business. Kids are supposed to be protected. People who deliberately

as well as the white bread assimilationists. A NAMBLA member from Seattle complains that "There's a feminist polemic which basically equates man-boy love with rape", while a Stonewall 25 organizer maintains that the original acceptance of NAMBLA by gays was simple naivete: "What we're talking about are value changes because of information that has come out that was kept under wraps before. More and more men are coming out as having been sexually abused as young people."

Quite a bit closer to the bone comes Gary Ray Bowles and his cover feature in the October 4th issue of THE ADVOCATE. "He served time in Tampa, Fla., for an attack on a woman in which the victim was severely beaten and her vagina lacerated with a knife. He was arrested in Atlanta for sodomy and battery -another Bowles trademark: 'He's rough trade', says Regan. 'Someone gives him a blow job and then pays him.'

Police, however, don't consider Bowles gay. His relationships with men are predatory: His intent seems to be to take their belongings. Evidently the encounters don't include sex other than fellatio performed on Bowles."

Bowles is the prime suspect in seven murders of gay men,